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**"SO LONG BOYS ... TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES" :
VICE SUPPRESSION AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS
AT CHANUTE FIELD DURING WORLD WAR II**

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"So Long Boys ...Take Care of Yourselves":
Vice Suppression and Civil-Military
Relations at Chanute Field During World War II
(TITLE)

BY

Adelheid Napier

THESIS

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“So Long Boys ... Take Care of Yourselves”:
Vice Suppression and Civil-Military Relations
at Chanute Field During World War II

A Thesis Submitted to
The Faculty of the History Department
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of History

Department of History

By
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Abstract

'So Long Boys ... Take Care of Yourselves': Vice Suppression and Civil-Military Relations at Chanute Field During World War II.'

Adelheid Napier

The United States' entry into World War II brought many changes to its communities. Many towns and villages found themselves transformed almost virtually overnight into military communities. A sudden influx of military personnel presented various difficulties for the communities attempting to adjust. When problems arose concerning both the military members and their civilian hosts, the success or failure experienced in meeting the challenges hinged on the ability and willingness of both factions to cooperate. Chanute Field, an Army Air Force base in Illinois, successfully rose to that challenge when faced with the increasing problem of vice activity and a rising venereal disease rate.

After the experiences of World War I, when venereal disease caused the loss of over a million man power days, the military reacted quickly to curtail a re-occurrence when troop numbers increased. After identifying prostitution as the main culprit in the infection of the men, the military command looked to the local communities surrounding their bases for assistance in combating the problem. While the majority of other communities failed miserably in their

rate, Chanute Field and the people of Champaign County succeeded in, if not eradicating the problem, controlling the situation.

This was accomplished through several tactics. Both the base recreational department and the neighboring communities provided ample recreational alternatives to a night in the red light district. Likewise, both factions bombarded their inhabitants with a steady stream of moral persuasion and medical rhetoric designed to enlighten people of the threat of venereal disease. To stop the spread of disease, law enforcement specifically targeted what was considered the source of infection: prostitution. The law enforcement officials of Champaign County vigorously sought out, arrested and prosecuted those guilty of vice activity. Those arrested on charges of prostitution in Champaign County could expect the stiffest fines and jail sentences possible.

Through these measures, the command at Chanute Field and the citizens of its neighboring communities helped the base to achieve one of the lowest rates of venereal disease infection among military camps during World War II. Other communities throughout the United States, and in fact Illinois itself, were not so lucky. While other communities saw their infection rates soar and vice activity increase, Chanute Field and Champaign County cooperated on tactics to successfully combat the situation.

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Introduction

In the years prior to America's entry into World War II, numerous cities and towns around the United States discovered themselves transformed into military communities. For larger cities, the creation of new army and naval bases within their limits had little overall effect. To the smaller towns, these camps often provided a boom to the local economy while changing the way the town operated. Some were fortunate to have experienced an infusion of military personnel in World War I. Previous experiences proved beneficial during the years of the war when issues developed necessitating cooperation between the officials of the city and the local military command. One such issue concerned the rising rate of venereal disease and the ever present problem of vice control.

Various historical interpretations exist concerning the difficulty controlling the venereal disease rate and vice conditions during World War II. According to John Costello in *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes*, the war years made American society more accepting of changes in sexual behavior. More people tolerated promiscuity and infidelity.¹ This toleration is also mentioned by Paul Fussel in *Wartime*. Fussel noted the developing indulgent attitudes towards sexual behavior from

¹ John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1987).

the beginning to the end of the war.² According to one historian, even the military adopted a standpoint of prevention over abstinence. Allan Brandt's *No Magic Bullet* asserts that in World War II the military abandoned the stance of abstinence preached in World War I. Concluding that they could not "stifle the instincts of man," the military adopted the motto "If you can't say no, take a pro."³ Prevention through the use of prophylactic measures replaced the previous advice of abstinence to avoid venereal infection.

Military authorities gave the recruits prophylactic devices, regularly examined the men and provided treatment if necessary. However, with the rise in venereal disease rates during the expansion programs, the military targeted the practice of prostitution as the culprit. When officials discovered that the amateur "patriotute" was primarily responsible, they declared a new war on vice. And yet, previous historians have noted that the military appears to have done little to aid the communities in their fight against vice. Brandt observed that the involvement of the military command in vice conditions took the shape of continued threats of invocation of the May Act, legislation designating prostitution near military camps a federal crime. Likewise, Richard Polenberg's *War and Society*

² Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 107-114.

³ Allan Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 164.

discusses the May Act threats along with a military push to close red light districts.⁴ Other tactics discussed include Richard R. Lingeman's description in *Don't You Know There's a War On?* of a military command that offered a suggestive remedy of established, regulated brothels.⁵ In *The First Strange Place*, Beth Bailey and David Farber's study of World War II Hawaii, it is noted that a crackdown on prostitution did not occur until 1944, when the civilian authorities were given control of the situation.⁶ Prior to that, Hawaii had been under martial law since Pearl Harbor. While the venereal disease infection rate concerned the military authorities, they did not concern themselves with the issues of control beyond preventive health measures and the threat of federal intervention. Only Allan Berube's *Coming Out Under Fire* mentioned a component of the military anti-vice campaign that directly included the local communities. Along with the troop lectures and proclaiming trouble spots off limits to servicemen, Berube referred to the Army's use of military policemen in civilian areas as deterrents to vice.⁷

⁴ Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1972), 151.

⁵ Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?: The American Home Front 1941-1945* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 92-93.

⁶ Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 129.

⁷ Allan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 120-121; This work deals with the issue of homosexuality and World War II. No mention of this issue was discovered in any of the documents pertaining to Chanute Field.

The U.S. military's official history of World War II and preventive medicine asserts that the military authorities wished for and encouraged cooperation among base commands and civilian officials but rarely experienced it.⁸ However, some base commanders found the communities surrounding them more than willing to oblige with vice and venereal disease control. Chanute Field, an Army Air Field greatly expanded in the days prior to World War II, provides an example of how both civil and military officials came together to solve a common problem. Both parties considered vice suppression and venereal disease control joint responsibilities and worked together to prevent escalating infection rates. Their cooperation endeavors proved successful, as Chanute Field experienced a lower than average venereal disease infection rate and Champaign County boasted a high arrest rate for suspected prostitutes.

This success was achieved through coordinated efforts of recreation, persuasion, health education and law enforcement. To distract the men from the lure of prostitution, both the civilian community and the base recreational department provided ample recreational activities. Moral persuasion was also employed to dissuade the men from patronizing prostitutes. Realizing that these tactics would not completely correct the situation, civilian and military authorities worked to educate their populations

⁸ Colonel John Lada, ed. *Preventive Medicine in World War II*, Vol. VIII (Washington D.C.: Office of the Surgeon General, 1976), 61.

concerning the health risks of venereal disease along with the possible medical ways of prevention. In addition, both factions alerted each other to any suspected cases in their midst which needed attention. Finally, the civilian law enforcement agencies robustly took up the task of repressing prostitution in the cities of Champaign-Urbana.

In all areas, the base command could be relied upon for assistance whenever possible. Likewise, the civilian officials proved reliable. Both communities, civilian and military, accepted responsibility for its citizens. Recreational activities were shared. The men were invited to anything remotely entertaining while the base opened its doors to members of the community. Moral behavior was expected from the recruits at Chanute just as it was from the members of the nearby towns. Health measures available to the military had civilian counterparts. Both sides cooperated with alerting the other to potential carriers. Lastly, while law enforcement was left up to the local police force, the base command assisted when possible and let it be known they were always available to take responsibility for the men of their command. Through this shared responsibility and experiences, Chanute Field and the communities surrounding it prove that cooperation between military and civilian authorities concerning vice and venereal disease control existed during World War II, producing positive results and lasting relationships.

This thesis utilizes a variety of contemporary printed manuscripted and non-textual sources. These include speeches, jail dockets, arrest records, oral histories and personal interviews. Also useful were contemporary scholarly journals, newspapers, government publications, minutes and conference reports and confidential correspondence. Most helpful were the voluminous unpublished official base histories and subject files which provided the insight into the everyday workings of a wartime air base. When supplemented by the oral histories these primary sources permitted a rare glimpse into the fast changing but short-lived world of World War II mobilization. Few military bases can boast of such a complete selection of historical material on the World War II era.

This thesis explores the role of civil military relations in regulating the wartime sexual behavior of soldiers on the home front. Communities with nearby military training facilities habitually experienced vice problems throughout World War II. Consequently, rates of venereal disease infection among military personnel increased. The experience of Chanute Field in World War II is significant due to its bucking the trend. Though it was the second largest technical training base during the war, Chanute boasted the lowest venereal disease rate of any army air field. This makes Chanute Field an anomaly in World War II America.

Success at Chanute Field hinged on several factors. Due to the base's geographic isolation, potential threats in the form of local communities were fewer. The size of these communities also played a role. Chanute Field was surrounded by small towns which welcomed the boom to their economy that a base provided. Additionally, a small town mentality which disdained lax sexual morals still prevailed. Previous history also proved beneficial. Though severely decreased in size, Chanute Field remained a presence after its creation during World War I, allowing the communities to establish a working relationship. It is this relationship which contributed the most to the success of venereal disease and vice control at Chanute Field. The military command at the base and their civilian counterparts continually worked to improve and maintain a freely communicating relationship which allowed them to come together to fight a problem concerning them both.

The military and civilian authorities surrounding Chanute developed and applied a series of strategies. Chapter One examines the creation and use of wholesome recreation to distract the servicemen from vice activities. Moral persuasion as a device of diversion is discussed in the second chapter, along with health education, prophylactic measures and treatment procedures. The third chapter delves into the issue of law enforcement procedures and compares the success of Chanute Field with the dismal failures of other military communities. Through the

examination of these strategies, this thesis illustrates how the relationship between the military civil authorities at Chanute Field and Champaign County produced a rare wartime success story in venereal disease and vice suppression.

Chapter 1

Disease, Donuts, and Dancing:

Wholesome Recreation vs. The Red Light District

"Don't shoot em; Chanute `em" was often heard by men assigned to Chanute Field in the early years of the camp's existence. After a quick birth and growth spurt amid World War I, the Army Air Field located 135 miles south of Chicago experienced a rapid decline between the world wars, leaving a hollow shell of a military encampment. Considering assignment to Chanute the equivalent of punishment, military men regarded this isolated camp adjacent to the tiny village of Rantoul (population 1600) as the closest thing to "Siberia."¹ But in 1938 this situation changed. Due to the distant threat of war and an allotment from the Works Progress Administration, Chanute underwent a "Great Renaissance." After a renovation totaling \$13.8 million, Chanute Field emerged, months before Pearl Harbor, as the second largest Army Air Force technical training center in the United States.² A camp which once housed 2,000 soldiers in 1938 quickly expanded to 17,500 by 1941.³ At its peak in 1944, Chanute Field boasted a population of 23,000 soldiers.⁴ While the base was still geographically

¹ Manuel E. Siso, and G.Y. Coats, *A Sixty Year History of Chanute Air Force Base, 1917-1977* (Chanute AFB, IL: Chanute Technical Training Center, 1977), 15.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

³ George Herrron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (Chanute Air Force Base: Office of History, 1941), 31.

⁴ Don Weckhorst, Chanute AFB Historian, interview by author, 8 April 1996.

isolated, assignment to Chanute no longer appeared an exile to the nether regions.

With the rapid expansion in military population came concern over the issue of venereal disease and prostitution. Large numbers of soldiers seemed to attract prostitution, which was often linked to the infection rate of venereal disease.⁵ Historical precedent triggered alarm in the United States Army concerning this issue. During World War I, as the Army increased, so did the venereal disease rate, with over 338,000 cases and seven million service days lost.⁶ Since 1939, Great Britain experienced an increase in the rate of syphilis due to the war time conditions, and the Army believed that America would follow suit if it did not act early to combat the situation. As John Costello points out, there was widespread belief that "more soldiers fall from VD than bullets."⁷ Though Chanute Field experienced a slight increase in venereal disease rates, efforts to control it proved successful. Unlike military areas throughout the country, Chanute Field boasted a comparatively low venereal disease rate due to the coordinated efforts of local and military authorities.

Venereal disease rates did increase with the onset of war. After Pearl Harbor, the Army's syphilis infection rate rose over 200 percent, with gonorrhea rates climbing

⁵ During World War II when people spoke of venereal disease they were referring to syphilis and gonorrhea.

⁶ Philip S. Broughton, *Prostitution and the War*, (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Committee, 1944), 2.

⁷ Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 39.

approximately 140 percent.⁸ The infection rate among the troops at Chanute Field followed this pattern of growth throughout war. At the Field, although the incidence varied from year to year venereal disease remained an ever present problem to the base command and the local communities. While in 1941 the rate of infection at Chanute was below that of the Army on a whole, the base experienced a steady climb as the war progressed.⁹ In 1942, seven to eighteen soldiers were infected for every group of one thousand men at the camp.¹⁰ The base in 1944 reported an all time peak of 133 per 1000.¹¹ By the end of the war in 1945, the rate increased to an average of 41.3 per 1000 per annum.¹²

An increase in vice activity and the accompanying rate of venereal disease concerned not only the military authorities of Chanute Field but also the surrounding communities. Even after the expansion program began in 1938, the Field still appeared isolated and unwelcoming to many of the men arriving for training. Rantoul and Champaign-Urbana, which surrounded the camp, at first offered little to entertain the men during their off-duty hours. With no appealing alternatives, many soldiers on leave drifted towards the red-light districts of nearby

⁸ Department of Public Health, *Illinois Health Messenger*, 17, (May 15, 1945): 37.

⁹ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (1941), 31.

¹⁰ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (1942), 190.

¹¹ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (1944), 368.

¹² Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (1945), 251.

communities to fill their free hours. Alarmed by this increasing occurrence and the resulting rising infection rate, the citizens of the nearby communities joined forces with the Field command in order to provide wholesome recreational alternatives.

Champaign-Urbana, located 15 miles south of the base, housed the University of Illinois and operated as a major railway hub. In contrast, Rantoul was a farm village located directly adjacent to the base. Though their circumstances varied, both communities were proud to have Chanute Field in their midst. News of the expansion program was received gladly after months of closure threats.¹³ The growth of the base meant employment opportunities, consumers for local businesses and a chance to be involved in the war effort. They considered themselves lucky and realized that there were "not many cities or villages that wouldn't nearly trade their town away to have Chanute Field located at its borders."¹⁴ Due to the pride and subsequent obligation they felt in hosting the newly enlarged base, the local citizens diligently worked to provide the soldiers with whatever they lacked. While at first many recruits were disappointed by the lack of glamour and excitement they had initially expected of Army life, the soldiers of Chanute Field soon found a virtual whirlwind of activities, shows and companionship eagerly waiting their participation.

¹³ *The Rantoul Press*, 1, February 9, 1939.

¹⁴ *The Rantoul Press*, 4, November 17, 1938.

The recruits arriving at Chanute in the pre-war days chose to enlist for various reasons. As the Depression lingered, many viewed the military as a chance to earn some greatly needed money. Others wished to escape the expected weariness of their lives. Faced with a future on the family farm, many young men decided they "didn't want to eat dust behind Dad's mules another season."¹⁵ Life in the Army appeared exciting, especially when a fellow watched his newly recruited best friend, on leave from Chanute, return every weekend to visit in a car full of girls.¹⁶ Others simply looked to the future, glimpsed the inevitable, and enlisted in the service branch and place of their choice before a draft board chose for them.

For many recruits the trip to Chanute happened to be their first visit to Illinois.¹⁷ One step off the train into the "sleepy little village of Rantoul" dispelled all notions of an exciting adventure.¹⁸ The harsh landscape of the expansive prairie, where "trees (were) few and far between", shocked many who hailed from more botanical settings. The weather likewise proved unnerving to those unaccustomed to the brusque wind.¹⁹ Rantoul itself proved disappointing as well. A town possessing a population of 1,600 and three bars euphemistically referred to as "the

¹⁵ Letter, Maurice Walton to Don Weckhorst, April 24, 1941, Octave Chanute Museum Archives (OCMA).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Letter, Roger Airgood to Don Weckhorst, October 22, 1990, OCMA.

¹⁸ Letter, Roland Smith to Don Weckhorst, 1988, OCMA.

¹⁹ Letter, Theodore Brundage to Mr. and Mrs. Brundage, October 27, 1941, OCMA.

recreation department" could not live up to the leisure-time expectations of the recruits.²⁰ To make matters worse, it seemed to many of the men that the ladies of Rantoul disappeared after dark.²¹

While Chanute Field appeared to be a "regular city", initially what few recreational facilities it possessed were "taxed beyond their limits."²² Between extensive physical training, drilling and the average eight hour day spent in airplane maintenance instruction, most recruits worked a sixty hour week. This utilized every bit of energy and discipline they could muster. At the end of their work day, the men greatly needed something to "offset the grueling pressures and strict discipline of the school."²³ With leisure activities overtaxed or lacking at the base, the troops looked elsewhere. When Rantoul failed to satisfy their needs, they turned to the surrounding communities.

In the early months of the war, frequent off-base travel was made possible by the regular issue of Class A passes which allowed the men to travel within a 200-mile radius of the Field.²⁴ In the pre- and early days of the war, gasoline could be had on base at a "ridiculously low price", often just 12 cents a gallon.²⁵ When rationing of gasoline on base began in late 1942, ninety miles of

²⁰ Letter, Walter Babington to Don Weckhorst, 1990, OCMA.

²¹ Letter, Richard Valentine to Don Weckhorst, February 21, 1991, OCMA

²² Letter, Roland Smith to Don Weckhorst, 1988, OCMA.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Letter, Frank Neason to Don Weckhorst, undated, OCMA.

²⁵ Letter, Roy Dart to Don Weckhorst, May 1984, OCMA

Tickets were sold in bulk at ten rides for two dollars. Individual rides were thirty cents.³¹

When these measures failed, the preferred method of travel by Chanuters was hitchhiking. Many first learned to hitchhike upon their arrival at Chanute.³² Soldiers never lacked opportunity to hitch rides from Rantoul to Champaign due to the eagerness of the Rantoul civilians to assist those in uniform. African-Americans stationed at Chanute Field also discovered hitchhiking as an easily attained mode of transportation. Though unable to mingle with the white soldiers on base, African-American airmen found the white members of the communities just as zealous to offer them rides as they were to provide them for the white recruits.³³ Rides to and from Rantoul were so plentiful that the men could travel to Champaign, return to the base for their meals and then quickly journey back to the city.³⁴ Once in Champaign-Urbana, rides could be obtained toward every conceivable direction. An area just to the west of Urbana, labeled the "Five Points", featured the intersection of five highways going in every direction. Bloomington, Danville, St. Louis and Chicago could all be reached through hitchhiking at this popular spot. Often at least 20 men queued up at a time to attempt rides. Long lines did not dissuade the men from hitchhiking for

³¹ Chanute Field Wings, 1, March 27, 1942.

³² Letter, Roger Airgood to Don Weckhorst, October 22, 1990, OCMA.

³³ William Walters, Interview, August 27, 1987, OCMA.

³⁴ Letter, Roger Airgood to Don Weckhorst, October 22, 1990, OCMA.

inevitably all would find a ride to the destination of their choice.³⁵

Just as the men easily solved their transportation problems, money issues proved simple to dodge. To many of the recruits, the money they made monthly as new soldiers was more than they had ever earned as civilians. The salary proved adequate to save for the future and to buy extras in life never previously enjoyed, such as cameras and pocket knives.³⁶ If the soldiers found themselves short of cash in the days before payday, inevitably some better-off Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) could provide a solution. In addition to his salary, each soldier received Exchange Coupon Books from which necessary, personal items could be purchased. Because each book was valued at five dollars, a few "affluent NCOs" would offer those strapped for cash three dollars for each book.³⁷ If the men did not desire to sell their coupon books, other NCOs happily worked as pawn-brokers. In the lean days before payday, a recruit could count on these men to lend them a few bucks if he turned over some small yet worthy item, such as a camera or wristwatch. The NCOs would then hold the item until payday when the soldier would reclaim it.³⁸

Armed with a bit of cash and ample modes of transportation, the soldiers of Chanute fearlessly made

³⁵ Letter, Frank Neason to Don Weckhorst, undated, OCMA.

³⁶ Letter, Theodore Brundage to Mr. and Mrs. Brundage, October 1941, OCMA.

³⁷ Letter, Roland Smith to Don Weckhorst, 1988, OCMA.

³⁸ Letter, Melvin J. Horn to Don Weckhorst, August 1991, OCMA.

their way into the surrounding communities. What they did when they arrived became the concern of all. As the number of recruits increased along with the venereal disease rate, civil and military authorities concerned themselves with the creation of wholesome recreation for the men to distract them from the lure of prostitutes. According to Brandt, this followed the program for venereal disease control instituted in World War I.³⁹ Public officials hoped that if a soldier had ample opportunity for good clean fun he would choose that option before he turned to vice.

Because the base facilities were already overtaxed, military authorities quickly appropriated funding for the construction of various recreational programs on base. Along with new physical fitness facilities came the creation of a rigorous and varied athletic program.⁴⁰ Every conceivable sporting activity found an outlet at Chanute. Softball and bowling leagues were formed along with basketball teams. Boxing and fencing tournaments were held.⁴¹

The base command instituted these programs for entertainment as well as self improvement. If a soldier wished to enhance his abilities in areas other than physical fitness, educational outlets were also made available. For those interested in automobile care, the base offered a

³⁹ Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 121.
⁴⁰ *The Rantoul Press*, 1, May 28, 1942.
⁴¹ *Chanute Field Wings*, 7, December 30, 1941.

course in motor vehicle maintenance.⁴² The Rantoul Methodist Church offered art lessons to any and all who wished to participate.⁴³ The University of Illinois joined the crusade for personal improvement with the creation of an off-duty education program. This program featured classes in such varied topics as Algebra, Spanish, German, French and Rhetoric.⁴⁴ To encourage those with musical inclinations, the Rantoul High School Band opened its rehearsals to those soldiers interested in keeping up and sharing their talent.⁴⁵

Yet most soldiers did not wish to spend all their off hours in the pursuit of self-improvement. Recreation dedicated strictly to fun also had its place. Military officials worked to see that such a place could be found on Chanute Field itself. If the soldier could be entertained on base, then he need not venture into the surrounding communities where he might encounter problems, such as prostitutes and exposure to venereal disease. An Officer's Club was already in operation on base and a Non-Commissioned Officer's Club was added with the conversion of an old hangar.⁴⁶ This NCO Club boasted a ballroom, a restaurant and two refreshment rooms serving both couples and

⁴² Chanute Field Wings, 5, March 19, 1943.

⁴³ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (1945), 428.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Chanute Field Wings, 2, June 13, 1941.

⁴⁶ *The Rantoul Press*, 1, August 13, 1942.

individuals. By April of 1942, the club's membership reached 1,200 and continued to grow throughout the war.⁴⁷

For those not eligible for membership in either the Officers or NCO Clubs, a Service Club existed on base where the men could gather and talk, enjoy listening to records, or read any of 120 newspapers and magazines.⁴⁸ A corner of this club served as the base library which began with 10,000 books and grew steadily throughout the war.⁴⁹ The communities around Chanute aided this endeavor through donations of recreational materials. The citizens of Champaign donated six pianos to Chanute for use in their service centers. Magazine subscriptions and books also found their way into these centers courtesy of the local citizens.⁵⁰ The base also possessed a Chaplain's Center where the men could gather to talk, study and read in addition to seeking spiritual counseling and guidance from the camp's chaplains.⁵¹

However, if quiet times and self improvement were not the diversion sought, Chanute also offered recruits entertainment reminiscent of Hollywood. Two theaters, each seating over 1,000 soldiers, had been erected during the expansion days and provided the men with opportunities to view movies straight from Hollywood.⁵² Favorites such as

⁴⁷ *The Rantoul Press*, 1, April 23, 1942.

⁴⁸ *Chanute Field Wings*, 12, April 10, 1942.

⁴⁹ *Chanute Field Wings*, 1, February 13, 1942: 4, May 1, 1942.

⁵⁰ *Chanute Field Wings*, 2, June 13, 1941.

⁵¹ *Chanute Field Wings*, 5, January 9, 1942.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Abbott and Costello and Charlie Chan played to full houses.⁵³ In addition, live entertainment shows often found their way to the Chanute stage. Ironically, many appealed to the very nature of the soldiers that the authorities wished to discourage. "Red, Hot and Blue," the first in a six-show series to hit Chanute in 1941, featured the "American Beauty Chorus," advertised as offering "shapely attractions" in the form of "an array of pretty girls."⁵⁴ The second show in the series, "Hollywood Frolics", featured a dance troupe referred to as the "Glamour Girls."⁵⁵ Another live show relied on the billing of an "All Girl Revue" to bring in an audience.⁵⁶ Obviously, the command recognized that the men desired the sight of attractive women and hoped that through the provision of shows which catered to this need in a non threatening way the men would not need to seek it elsewhere. In addition to these revues, many well known celebrities such as Jeanette MacDonald, Glenn Miller, and Gene Autry arrived on tour to entertain the troops.⁵⁷

In spite of the efforts of Chanute officials to provide adequate entertainment on base, the soldiers frequently ventured into the neighboring communities to seek off duty diversions. This often took the form of patronizing the

⁵³ *Chanute Field Wings*, 4, January 16, 1942.

⁵⁴ *Chanute Field Wings*, 7, May 23, 1941.

⁵⁵ *Chanute Field Wings*, 2, May 30, 1941.

⁵⁶ *Chanute Field Wings*, 1, March 19, 1943.

⁵⁷ *Chanute Field Wings*, 1, July 31, 1942; 1, June 4, 1943; 1, June 13, 1943.

local taverns in Champaign, Urbana and other outlying areas.⁵⁸ As Paul Fussell asserts, liquor consumption by soldiers was commonplace in World War II.⁵⁹ Connecting liquor consumption with the threat of prostitution, community officials worked to produce suitable, appealing alternatives. According to Chanute officials, it was restlessness that resulted in the problem of venereal disease and something needed to be found to relieve the soldiers' discontentment.⁶⁰ Chief among the new alternatives to taverns was the U.S.O. Canteen.

The days just preceding World War II saw the creation of the United Services Organizations for National Defense, commonly referred to as the U.S.O. This organization combined the talents of the Young Mens' Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army and the National Travelers' Association of America. By February 1941, the U.S. Government responded to this coalition of morale and welfare services with a \$15 million allotment for the construction of U.S.O. clubs near military camps and in large cities throughout the country.⁶¹ A portion of this funding became available to the community of Rantoul in June of 1941. After purchasing 19 acres and drawing up plans for the club, which would

⁵⁸ Letter, Roger Airgood to Don Weckhorst, October 22, 1990, OCMA.

⁵⁹ Fussell, *Wartime*, 96.

⁶⁰ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (1945)*, 11.

⁶¹ Whitmore, *Heroes on the Homefronts*, 15.

adjoin a new park, officials broke ground for the new club on October 30, 1941.⁶²

With an eye towards the future, the Village of Rantoul, which had campaigned to oversee the construction, chose concrete for the building blocks for their new facility. While other U.S.O. clubs were constructed out of wood, Rantoul insisted that their club be of a more substantial material. Previous experiences with city fires had resulted in a ban on new wooden structures.⁶³ In addition, Chanute Field was considered among the locals to be the "show place of show places in all Illinois" and they wanted a structure complimentary to that stature.⁶⁴ The constructed facility also reflected the village's hope for continuity with the military base: an enduring structure for an enduring relationship between Chanute Field and Rantoul.

Two weeks after Pearl Harbor, the men of Chanute Field attended the opening of Rantoul's new U.S.O. Club. A Champaign U.S.O. center quickly followed in January 1942, when an old school building in the downtown area was renovated.⁶⁵ These institutions proved so popular that coupled with the increase in numbers at Chanute, Rantoul received a second U.S.O. club in 1942.⁶⁶ Urbana discerned the need for its own U.S.O and decided to renovate the old Rollerdomo skating rink into a brand new club, which opened

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *The Rantoul Press*, Nov. 17, 1938.

⁶⁵ *Chanute Field Wings*, 1, January 16, 1942.

⁶⁶ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (1945)*, 51.

in 1943.⁶⁷ Once their doors were open to welcome visitors, the U.S.O.s found the volunteers operating the clubs as enthusiastic as those involved in the construction process.

The clubs possessed an unbelievably wide variety of activities. Between the Service Club on base and the area U.S.O.s, and a new Servicemen's' Center in Rantoul, a soldier could find virtually any conceivable wholesome entertainment.⁶⁸ Activities ran from checker meets to community sing alongs and tap dancing lessons.⁶⁹ Chess games, bridge games, pinochle tournaments, and even old fashioned spelling bees took place in the centers. The formation of clubs resulted in an outlet for any creative or recreational impulse. Music appreciation clubs met, as did bridge clubs. Military personnel and civilians formed drama societies and staged a variety of productions. Live entertainment was offered daily. As a result, Chanute men enjoyed a virtual cornucopia of live theater. Students from the University of Illinois staged elaborate productions for the Service Club.⁷⁰ Minstrel shows, acrobatic feats, and even three-wing circuses found their way to the stage for the benefit of the men.⁷¹ In addition, there were concerts from such varied performers as the University of Illinois

67 *The Champaign News Gazette*, 2, August 21, 1942.

68 *Chanute Field Wings*, 2, May 1, 1942.

69 *Chanute Field Wings*, 6, March 6, 1942.

70 *Chanute Field Wings*, 2, April 10, 1942.

71 *Chanute Field Wings*, 3, May 29, 1942.

Choir to the Chicago Civic Opera Company.⁷² The clubs held theme parties , such as Mardi Gras celebrations and the NCO Club's annual "49er Party" complete with decorations reminiscent of the Wild West and gold rush days.⁷³

Through both military and community efforts, the men of Chanute Field had ample opportunities for entertainment to fill the off hours without resorting to a trip to the red light district. Four U.S.O.s, three recreation centers, two camp theaters, an extensive library, a sports program, educational opportunities and a never ending calendar of shows and events awaited the soldier with a few free hours. The recreational calendar for a typical week in July listed over seventy activities open to the troops.⁷⁴ While these opportunities provided the soldiers with activities to fill the vacant hours and offered camaraderie with other men, they did not provide the female companionship the men sought. As one observer noted, "Tiddlywinks is no substitute for a girl."⁷⁵ The military and local authorities soon recognized the need to provide the soldiers with a social life which included members of the opposite sex. Once again, members of the local communities enthusiastically stepped in to fill this need.

The chief device used to satisfy this need was the coed dances held by the various clubs with the aid of the local

⁷² *Chanute Field Wings*, 2, April 10, 1942; 2, September 4, 1942.

⁷³ *Chanute Field Wings*, 1, April 24, 1942.

⁷⁴ *Chanute Field Wings*, 3, July 2, 1943.

⁷⁵ Department of Public Health, *Illinois Health Messenger*, 13 (August 1, 1941), 90.

female population. Every weekend, the base turned hangar T-5 into a dance hall.⁷⁶ Likewise, the Service Club on the camp sponsored a weekly dance. In the summers, the tennis courts were lighted for dancing.⁷⁷ The U.S.O.s in the surrounding communities also sponsored several dances a week. A typical week in the Champaign-Urbana/Chanute Field area consisted of at least seven opportunities for the men of Chanute Field to meet and dance with the young ladies of the community. In an effort to cajole each man into taking part in the dancing festivities, an abundance of free dance lessons were offered. The local YMCA offered ballroom dance instruction weekly as did the Service Club on base.⁷⁸

The girls who eagerly boarded buses to spend their evenings dancing and conversing with the soldiers came from the neighboring towns of Danville, Champaign, Urbana, Mattoon and Charleston.⁷⁹ These same women received invitations to other organized functions such as "down-on-the-farm" picnics, boating activities and moonlight hayrides.⁸⁰ The ice skating rink at the University of Illinois designated every Sunday night as "Chanute Night" and opened its doors to the soldiers only with invitations to the girls of the community to join them.⁸¹ When the

⁷⁶ Chanute Field Wings, 1, February 13, 1942.

⁷⁷ Chanute Field Wings, 1, June 13, 1941.

⁷⁸ The Rantoul Press, 3, February 19, 1942; Chanute Field Wings, 1, April 24, 1942.

⁷⁹ Charleston and Mattoon were approximately 70 miles from Chanute Air Force Base.

⁸⁰ Mary Watters, *Illinois In the Second World War: Operation Home Front* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1952), 168.

⁸¹ Chanute Field Wings, 2, February 6, 1942.

Army created the Decatur Rest Camp for soldiers in May of 1942, local women were invited to join the 100 or so men for activities such as picnicking, swimming and, of course, dancing.⁸²

To head off potential predicaments caused by the appearance of the "wrong sort" of girl at these functions, local communities carefully interviewed each female volunteer.⁸³ No community wished to find its female volunteers barred from coed activities due to the unscrupulous behavior of a few girls. Evidence of strong morals allowed approved women seats on the bus to any social event attended by soldiers. After passing the interview, the women still found themselves subject to rules regarding their conduct with the G.I.s. The rules of conduct were geared towards discouraging the development of attachments between the soldiers and their dancing partners so they forbade any close contact.⁸⁴ These measures attempted to eliminate the possibility that the activities planned to curb the venereal disease rate might actually contribute to it.

Likewise, the military took precautions when allowing the women on base for the camp's dances. Base command required all female guests to carry photo identification

⁸² Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (1942), 487; Chanute Field Wings, 1, April 24, 1942.

⁸³ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (September 1944-October 1944), 331.

⁸⁴ Whitmore, *Heroes on the Homefront*, 31.

cards obtained prior to the event.⁸⁵ In addition, all female guests were expected to be off the base by 11 p.m.⁸⁶ Just as the U.S.O.s required a certain code of behavior from the girls who attended social functions, the military authorities likewise expected their men to behave as gentlemen while on leave from the base. Passes issued to allow a soldier to leave the base contained a list of conditions regarding conduct that the men were expected to follow while in the surrounding communities. Soldiers were required to sign these passes to demonstrate their understanding of the code and their pledge to follow it.⁸⁷

This dual enforcement of conduct between the local and military authorities attests to the cooperation between the two factions in attempting to divert the soldiers of Chanute from liaisons with prostitutes through ample opportunities for good clean fun. The swiftness in which the local communities worked to create the new U.S.O. facilities demonstrates the eagerness with which the people of the neighboring areas worked to aid the military not only in their fight against prostitution but also in their efforts to keep the men's morale high. The people of Champaign County backed their dedication with time, money and gifts. Donated materials furnished nearly all U.S.O. and Service clubs and centers.

⁸⁵ Chanute Field Wings, 1, January 9, 1942.

⁸⁶ Chanute Field Wings, 1, November 13, 1942.

⁸⁷ Chanute Field Wings, 1, January 15, 1943.

The Rantoul Servicemen's Center originally began and operated on New Deal funding lost its financial base in the midst of the war years.⁸⁸ Under threat of closure, the Rantoul Recreation Board looked elsewhere for funding and found it among the local businesses who readily donated money, magazine subscriptions and supplies.⁸⁹ From performing to serving, volunteers for activities and programs were never hard to find. Similarly, the women of the communities enthusiastically offered to aid the men in easing their loneliness in wholesome, respectable ways.

This camaraderie extended both ways. The civilians of the community frequently received invitations to join in the military social activities. The dances and parties planned for the men on base often included extended invitations to their civilian counterparts. When a U.S.O or service center held an opening or special event, military dignitaries made efforts to attend.

Together the military authorities of Chanute Field and the civilian population of the neighboring communities worked to combat the problem of prostitution and venereal disease. After facing the threat of losing Chanute Field, the local citizens considered themselves lucky to have the base in their midst and worked to show their appreciation through cooperation in the battle against vice and venereal disease. A successful component of this fight was the

⁸⁸ This was part of the Works Progress Administration Program that expanded the base.

⁸⁹ *The Rantoul Press*, 1, December 24, 1942.

continuous array of alternate distractions. The nearby towns wholeheartedly embraced the soldiers of Chanute and invited them to become a part of their communities. At holidays, more families issued invitations to dinner than there were men to attend. What communities lacked to offer the soldiers, they quickly created, such as the U.S.O.s. No soldier wanted for entertainment or community feeling while stationed at Chanute Field. Army life might not have been the glamorous adventure recruits originally imagined , but the reality turned out to be warmer and more entertaining than the desolate, sleepy place they initially encountered.

Chapter 2

If You Can't Say No, Take a Pro:

Moral and Medical Persuasion

While the creation of wholesome recreation proved important to the fight against prostitution and a rising venereal disease rate, it did not erase the problem altogether. Even with the large number of amusements available, Chanute soldiers still gravitated towards red light districts when searching for ways to fill their off duty hours. The military and local officials geared both their programs of dissuasion and medical treatment towards these soldiers. By illuminating both the health risk and the moral issues involved, the authorities hoped to discourage the men from frequenting prostitutes. Knowing these attempts would never be completely effective, officials devised health guidelines for the soldiers and the women they patronized. Once again, the coordinated efforts of military authorities at Chanute Field and their civilian counterparts proved unusually successful in fighting the venereal disease rate and vice activity.

Fighting prostitution through the use of morality proved somewhat difficult during World War II. As Costello notes, the war years appeared to accelerate the "liberalization of the moral attitudes" of society and aid the subsequent "relaxation of moral restraints."¹ Wartime

¹ Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 2.

sexual behavior was dismissed with the claim that "we were not really immoral, there was a war on."² This belief in the war's moratorium on sexual standards appeared just as pervasive on the homefront as it did in the battlefields overseas.

The Army faced a quandary over the issue of morality. Expectations of the armed forces concerning the troops were conflicting. The same men fighting to uphold American society were also "expected to abandon its most cherished principles for the duration" of the war, such as changing their attitudes towards killing, in order to win.³ Coupled with this was the historically and universally accepted belief that the "sexually aggressive man makes the best fighter."⁴ This combination allowed the relaxation of the usual beliefs in chastity and morality.⁵

Because of society's more lax attitude towards sexual behavior, the fight against prostitution and venereal disease proved difficult for those who stressed the issue of morality. However, this did not stop the military authorities or local communities from taking every opportunity to remind the men of the immorality and illegality of prostitution. The base command utilized a combination of morality lectures and religious counseling by the chaplains.

² Ibid., 7.

³ Ibid., 74.

⁴ Ibid., 76.

⁵ Ibid.

The years of World War II saw the growth in diversity among the chaplaincy of the United States Armed Services. Due to an agreement with the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), which worked to promote religious pluralism, the military authorities joined their program for the promotion of religious tolerance among military members. Through increased toleration the Army hoped to achieve unity while also increasing morale among the troops.⁶ After determining that the previous four categories of chaplains (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and African-American) were inadequate for the needs of all the men, the military expanded its rolls.⁷ By the end of the war, over 75 faiths were represented by the almost 8,000 chaplains on the military payroll.⁸

At Chanute Field, this increase in the chaplaincy took the form of new chapels and an ever expanding number of chaplains at the men's disposal. In the beginning years of the war, the camp quickly erected five chapels catering to the needs of the various religious denominations represented at Chanute.⁹ This increase in the availability of religious counseling aided the military in their attempts to use a soldier's sense of morality in dissuading him from patronizing red light districts. The venereal disease

⁶ David Chambers, "History of the National Conference on Religious to the Air Force" *Military Chaplain's Review* (Winter 1990): 115-124.

⁷ Winston L. King, "What the Army Taught Me About the Church"

Christendom II (Autumn 1946): 464.

⁸ Chambers, 115-124.

⁹ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (1945), 53.

control officer's sex morality lectures served a dual purpose. They informed the troops of the dangers of the diseases and stressed the need for prophylactic measures if one did indulge, while also advocating the morally correct choice of abstinence.¹⁰ Building on the idea that morality was effective in combating vice, the Army hoped that religion would prove persuasive in the fight against prostitution. Though not expanded particularly for this purpose, the growth of the chaplaincy aided the military in this effort.

The "Chaplain's Message", a bi-monthly column written by the camp's chaplain for the base newspaper, attempted to influence impressionable young recruits. One column, entitled "A Mother's Prayer", outlined the hopes of one mother for her son while he served in the Army. This prayer included the hope that God would grant her boy "the strength to overcome temptation" and that He will "help him to acquit himself at all times as a good soldier of God and Country." The chaplain flatly stated the responsibility of those around the soldiers for guiding the young men in their morality decisions by concluding the mother's prayer with the statement: "May he find influences in the camp and surrounding community which will help him to maintain his moral standards and to live as God would have him."¹¹

¹⁰ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (1945)*, 212.
¹¹ *Chanute Field Wings*, 4, September 19, 1941.

Another column attempted to inform the recruits of actions in life that did not pay. Topping the list was the idea that "to have a good time at the expense of an uneasy conscience the next morning" did not pay.¹² Thus the chaplain attempted to appeal to those who might be unmoved by a mother's plea but maintained their own inner morality. Believing that loss of virginity or having frequent sexual relations with women made one a real soldier seemed prevalent among the recruits.¹³ Another "Chaplain's Message" took aim at this "most recent reputation of moral irresponsibility some soldiers feel obligated to uphold", claiming that the importance of the tradition of soldiers excelling in religion and military tactics far outweighed sexual prowess. "There is nothing effeminate or unworthy about religion" and to claim it superseded the new found belief of what a soldier should be was to ignore the glorious tradition of the military.¹⁴

State officials also worked to remind their boys going off to war of their moral responsibilities. While state departments published many pamphlets regarding the medical aspects of venereal disease, they also strove to remind the men of other reasons to avoid temptation. One pamphlet in particular appears at first to be a health guideline for the men on how to avoid the disease. After a brief deluge of medical facts and figures, the pamphlet offered a moral

¹² Chanute Field Wings, 4, October 3, 1941.

¹³ Letter, Richard Valentine to Don Weckhorst, February 21, 1991, OCMA.

¹⁴ Chanute Field Wings, 2, August 22, 1941.

argument against prostitution and sexual relations. Beginning with the statement that there is no such thing as a "safe prostitute", the pamphlet advised the use of prophylactics when engaging in sex with "a loose woman."¹⁵ However, this medical prevention is only "for those who are not restrained by their ideals, their religion or their sense of duty or decency."¹⁶ The author implored the man in uniform to consider what damage may befall his character if he keeps company with prostitutes. Other harmful results of prostitution included the loss of a man's self respect. By patronizing prostitutes, a man "may damage the high ideals patiently taught him by his parents and church." Instead of giving in to such behavior the men should endeavor to make the

year of training count for the future. Return home a better man, morally, mentally and physically, with nothing to regret or fear and with your duty well done.¹⁷

Although national attitudes towards sex were changing, the towns and villages of Champaign County still very much possessed a small town mentality. A general relaxation of morals was not evident in East Central Illinois. Thus, the local communities joined in the attempt to offer moral guidance in the fight against prostitution. If the soldiers found their religious needs unfulfilled by the camp's

¹⁵ Walter Clarke, *So Long Boys...Take Care of Yourselves: Educational Health Circular No. 109* (New York: American Social Hygiene Association, 1941), 1,4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

services, community churches frequently reminded the men that their programs were always available to them. The First Methodist Church of Rantoul often published open invitations to the soldiers, reminding them that the chapel doors remained open seven days a week. A holiday did not pass without some function aimed at the entertainment of soldiers. To remind the men of the comforts of home, and thus of their mothers who would always expect moral behavior, many churches, such as the First Methodist Church of Champaign invited soldiers to Sunday dinners with member families.¹⁸

If moral persuasion failed to impress upon the men the necessity for foregoing a trip to the red light district, military authorities relied upon the fear of syphilis and gonorrhoea to dissuade the soldiers. In the years preceding the war, the Army observed gonorrhoea and syphilis to be the second and fifth (respectively) most frequent cause of illness among the ranks. The experience of the military during World War I demonstrated that millions of manpower days would be lost if venereal disease infection was not avoided by the troops.¹⁹ Gonorrhoea produced kidney infections, arthritis and sterility while those afflicted with syphilis might experience paresis, locomotor ataxia insanity or even death.²⁰ Informing the men of the

¹⁸ Chanute Field Wings, 5, October 10, 1941.

¹⁹ Broughton, *Prostitution and the War*, 2.

²⁰ In the 1920's, 20 percent of mental institution inmates suffered from tertiary syphilis. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 65,117.

detrimental effects of venereal disease was just one component of their medical campaign against the rising infection rate. This information drive was part of a two pronged attack on venereal disease. Avoidance of situations conducive to infection was advised. However, the military command conceded that " a man is going to have sexual intercourse regardless of the price or danger to his health."²¹ The Army's attitude was that "you absolutely must not; but if by chance you do ...", immediately seek medical attention.²² The military advised the men to eschew situations exposing them to venereal disease, yet accepted the fact that total abstinence would not occur. To combat the threat of venereal disease, the Army and Navy, along with federal, state and local authorities devised plans of education, prevention and treatment of exposed individuals.

Awareness and prevention programs included lectures and films alerting the soldiers to the threat of venereal disease and the options available for prevention. On the national level, the Surgeon General's office created a Venereal Disease Control division, which was continually strengthened throughout the war.²³ A venereal disease bulletin was published and circulated among military personnel.²⁴ Medical personnel found themselves designated

²¹ Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 87.

²² *Ibid.*, 88.

²³ Lada, *Preventive Medicine in World War II*, 61.

²⁴ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (1917-1941)*, 81.

as Venereal Disease Officers, charged with the task of dealing with the issue at camps with populations of 20,000 or more.²⁵ The filmmakers of Hollywood were contracted by the Army to create an eye catching, informative sex hygiene film.²⁶ In addition to education films, individual squadrons at Chanute Field encouraged their men to attend lectures on the topic of venereal disease prevention. These lectures became mandatory once a squadron experienced unusually high infection rates. If a soldier's squadron was one of the unlucky ones, he could expect to attend venereal disease lectures twice a month until the rate dropped.²⁷

During these lectures, the men of Chanute were urged to take prophylactic measures while on leave in the surrounding communities. Condoms were freely distributed on base, "without charge and without question."²⁸ Prophylactic kits were also easily obtained at 'pro' stations located on Chanute Field. At the war's height, five 'pro' stations remained open on base 24 hours a day.²⁹ The available kits contained injections and cleaning substances for the exposed areas. When the base stations were not open, prophylactic kits were distributed at the guard gates immediately upon entering the camp or throughout the local communities at railway and bus depots.³⁰

²⁵ *Champaign News Gazette*, 3, March 5, 1942.

²⁶ Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 38.

²⁷ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (Sept-Oct. 1944)*, 369.

²⁸ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (May-June 1944)*, 296.

²⁹ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (January-July 1943)*, 458.

³⁰ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (July-August 1945)*, 212.

One section of the Chanute populace provided the command with particular concern over its venereal disease rate. The African-American troops stationed at the camp had an inordinately high infection rate when compared to Chanute as a whole. For the month of July in 1944, Section F, the African-American troops, reported a venereal disease rate of 209 per 1000 per annum, compared to the mean number of 23 per 1000 for the other sections at Chanute.³¹ This replicated the higher rate of venereal disease for African-Americans that occurred during World War I.³² Remedies suggested and tried ranged from continued compulsory attendance at all hygiene lectures and films to the relocation of pro stations to areas in the surrounding communities frequented by African-Americans, making it more likely they would utilize the methods available.³³ This reduced the rate temporarily. The infection rate among African-Americans fluctuated throughout the war, yet always remained higher than the Chanute average.

In addition to coordinating the fight against the venereal disease rate with other military personnel, the venereal disease medical officer attempted to join forces with the health officials in the local communities.³⁴ The military directives concerning the venereal disease problem called for the "closest possible cooperation and

³¹ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (July-August 1944), 268.
³² Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 116.
³³ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit* (Nov-Dec. 1944), 89.
³⁴ *Champaign News Gazette*, 3, March 5, 1942.

collaboration among the Army, the U.S. Public Health Service, civilian agencies and organizations and the communities" ³⁵ to attain an acceptable level of control of the venereal disease rate among the troops. The Illinois state health officials and local authorities responded positively to this effort of cooperation. In conjunction with the military program of increased awareness, the State of Illinois Health Department published numerous education circulars aimed at alerting the public to the threat of venereal disease. Pamphlets entitled "Syphilis and Your Town" and "Health or Disease?" warned the civilian population and made them aware of their responsibility to the soldiers in their midst. According to the government of Illinois, the problem of venereal disease was a local one and the communities were responsible because "soldiers and sailors ... do not become infected ... while in camp. They get these diseases in the communities ... which they visit while off duty."³⁶ In conjunction with this charge of responsibility, each town was given a questionnaire to be used in discerning the health system it presently possessed and would need to improve to combat venereal disease.³⁷

Once aware of their responsibilities, the state and local authorities acted accordingly. Additional educational

³⁵ Lada, *Preventive Medicine in World War II*, 61.

³⁶ *Statutes of Illinois Relating to Environmental Sanitation and Disease Prevention in and around Military Camps-Naval Bases and Defense Industries: Educational Circular No. 125* (Springfield: State Department of Public Health, 1941), 3.

³⁷ *Syphilis and Your Town: Educational Health Circular No. 17* (United States Public Health Service), 2.

efforts included mobile exhibits which toured the state, visiting schools, fairs, and festivals spreading the word to the populace.³⁸ Many of these programs were part of a larger venereal disease awareness program begun in the 1930's under the guidance of Thomas Parran, the surgeon general. This included the designation of one week in February as Social Hygiene Week , featuring intensive efforts to instruct the civilian populace of the dangers of venereal disease.³⁹ This awareness program also worked to lift the stigma placed on venereal disease. It was hoped that once the "taboo of syphilis" was lifted, more would seek out treatment which was determined "the most practical means of control."⁴⁰

At first, many communities lacked the facilities to treat the members of their community. This was soon remedied with the passage of a federal act that allocated \$15 million to aid in the battle against venereal disease.⁴¹ Between 1939 and 1941, 60 health clinics were created in Illinois, 20 of them located downstate.⁴² In addition, 33 centers dedicated solely to the treatment of venereal disease were established downstate.⁴³ Treatment

³⁸ *Major Aspects Of Social Hygiene In Illinois: Educational Health Circular No. 108* (Department of Public Health, 1941),13.
³⁹ Department of Public Health, *Illinois Health Messenger*, 14 (January 15, 1942),6-7.

⁴⁰ *Syphilis and Your Town: Educational Health Circular No. 17* (United States Public Health Service),1.

⁴¹ *Major Aspects Of Social Hygiene In Illinois: Educational Health Circular No. 108* (Department of Public Health, 1941),8.

⁴² *Ibid.*,9.

⁴³ *Mobilization of State Health Forces: Educational Health Circular No.41* (Department of Public Health,1942),13.

outlines and refresher courses in the proper procedures for venereal disease treatment were available to all physicians who requested them. In addition, free testing was available to all citizens, regardless of financial status. In the days before the war, the cost of treatment ranged from \$80 to \$1000.⁴⁴ Now medication was dispensed free of charge to those in need of it.⁴⁵ In an effort to make testing accessible to all, booths offering free blood tests for venereal disease were set up at the Illinois State Fair.⁴⁶

The importance placed on testing for infection emphasizes the significance placed by military and civilian officials on identifying those carrying the disease and quickly administering treatment. Like their civilian counterparts, military members had ample opportunities to be tested and treated for venereal disease. Every potential military member was tested for syphilis and gonorrhea during the induction physical. At Chanute Field throughout the war years, routine testing occurred frequently, sometimes as often as monthly.⁴⁷ In addition, those found infected with the diseases were quarantined and treated by the medical staff. However, the military could compel its members to submit to testing and treatment. Those infected in the civilian world faced no regular testing and might remain at large, due to the lack of enforcement measures.

⁴⁴ Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 131.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁷ Herron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (1917-1941)*, 315.

The state of Illinois reminded communities and citizens of the rights of local authorities in the fight against venereal disease. County and city authorities were reminded of the quarantine laws which allowed them to segregate and treat those found infected. State funding was available for these procedures.⁴⁸ Citizens could not be detained for venereal disease examination unless arrested for a crime. If found infected, treatment was mandatory for persons held in custody. Any person detained for a criminal act could be detained and tested. If the arrest was for prostitution, testing was automatic due to the assumption that all prostitutes were possessed of the "dreadful affliction."⁴⁹

The powers of local communities to curb vice went beyond quarantine and treatment. City councils and village boards had the right "to declare what shall be a nuisance" to sanitary conditions within the town and "to impose upon parties who may create continue or suffer nuisances to exist."⁵⁰ They could also make any regulations deemed "necessary to suppress disease", including the appointment of a board of health and the dictation of its powers and duties. In addition, hospitals and clinics worked closely with local authorities. These officials were given a green

⁴⁸ *Statutes of Illinois Relating to Environmental Sanitation and Disease Prevention in and around Military Camps-Naval Bases and Defense Industries: Educational Circular No. 125* (Springfield: State Department of Public Health, 1941), 17.

⁴⁹ *Rules and Regulations for the Control of Communicable Diseases* (State of Illinois: Department of Public Health, 1945), 73-74.

⁵⁰ *Powers of City Councils and Village Boards Relative to Sanitary Conditions and Nuisances: Educational Health Circular No. 130* (State of Illinois: Department of Public Health, 1942), 2.

light by the state to take every measure possible to fight the rising rate of venereal disease.

Champaign-Urbana exercised the rights granted them by the State and opened a local health department that offered free treatment for venereal disease.⁵¹ To identify and treat those infected with venereal disease, the officials of Chanute Field and the neighboring communities coordinated their efforts. Each group assisted the other in order to identify the residents among their populace who might harbor the disease. Health department officials notified the camp's medical officers if any suspected cases of venereal disease either originated from or might have been transferred to Chanute men. Similarly, following a Venereal Disease Control Order issued by the U.S. Army, the medical corps was obligated to report any discovered cases of infection to the local Department of Health. This included the men on base as well as names of possible contacts and sources that the men were required to divulge upon discovery. This was a circular arrangement, for when the military officials notified the civilian health department of contacts from their community, the local clinic was held responsible for the examination and subsequent quarantine of all suspected sources.⁵²

With military expansion in the days preceding World War II and into the war years, the U.S. Army identified venereal

⁵¹ Department of Public Health, *Illinois Health Messenger*, 15 (January 1943), 134.

⁵² Lada, *Preventive Medicine in World War II*, 102.

disease as a threat to the readiness of the military forces. The military further recommended coordinated efforts among the military medical squadrons and the public health officials of the states, cities and counties surrounding the camps as the medical mode of attack against the debilitating effect of infection. The military hoped that all would cooperate. However, the Army soon discovered that "it was often difficult, sometimes impossible to bring some of the commanding officers and certain medical and public officials into line with the official policy."⁵³ Fortunately, the officials of Chanute Field and the surrounding areas proved to be an exception. Both groups incessantly bombarded the people under their care with numerous opportunities to learn about venereal disease. Additionally, ample moral guidance was provided for the soldiers from Chanute and Champaign-Urbana officials who both felt responsibility for the recruits' health and well being. Realizing, however, that the threat of disease often failed to dissuade the "man who would transgress"⁵⁴, preventive measures were readily available. The community allowed the creation of "pro" stations in its midst to fight the disease within the quickest possible time following exposure. Accessible and free testing and treatment was available to all in an effort to protect both the military and civilian populations. If individuals did not submit to treatment, laws existed to

⁵³ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁴ Minutes, First Regional Conference on Social Protection, 12 11 42., RG 513.13, Illinois State Archives.

force submission in a further effort to protect the community. Both military and civilian authorities could rely on the other for notification of contacts and infections in an effort to halt the spread of disease. Though hopeful that moral persuasion would prove somewhat effective, both groups realized that it would not be enough. Through communication and coordinated efforts, the army command at Chanute Field and the state and local health departments successfully fought the spread of venereal disease.

Chapter 3

The End of the Line for Good-time Charlotte:

Law Enforcement Issues

While attempts at social diversion, moral persuasion and medical efforts were aimed primarily at the servicemen, law enforcement efforts specifically targeted the women involved in prostitution. The practice of prostitution was not only a menace to the health and well being of the soldier and society, it was illegal. Attitudes towards sex had changed but the laws against prostitution remained. The Provost Marshal at Chanute Field took no official action to aid the surrounding communities with their law enforcement campaign against prostitution, but evidence demonstrates that cooperation between military and civilian authorities existed. While the local police forces accepted the brunt of the work, the command at Chanute assisted where it could. Unlike other World War II wartime communities, together they worked to produce a successful experience in the effort to control vice activity.

Civilian and military authorities predicted potential problems from the start of Chanute's expansion program. Though not specifying vice control, local newspapers outlined the need for additional policemen, claiming that as "soldiers and civilians mingle together in greater numbers all the time, some trouble is bound to pop up now and then.

It just can't be helped."¹ The threat of an increase in prostitution with a subsequent rise in the rate of venereal diseases concerned both the civilian population and military populace. The cities of Champaign and Urbana reported the expansion of prostitution rings to accommodate the anticipated volume of business arriving from Chanute Field.² This potential upsurge in business often attracted prostitutes from out of state. Within one two-week period, recent arrivals from surrounding states accounted for over half of the vice arrests in Champaign-Urbana. For example, two admitted prostitutes, arrested for vagrancy, had moved to the Champaign area from Biloxi, Mississippi, claiming that "their best customers were soldiers."³

Other vice reports cited hotels in the Champaign-Urbana area operating as brothels, even providing soldiers with civilian clothes to change into upon arrival in an attempt to hinder discovery by police and military authorities. Likewise, "The Casanova Hotel", a group of cabins located on the outskirts of town, provided rentals to soldiers for trysts with prostitutes. Even the taxi drivers, ferrying soldiers to and from the Field and about town, profited from the situation. Soldiers relied on the drivers to locate

¹ *The Rantoul Press*, 4, April 13, 1939.

² Letter, Willis George to C.S. Havens and S.E. Griffith, September 7, 1941, RG 6/1/36, UIUC Archives.

³ *Champaign News Gazette*, 2, January 18, 1942.

prostitutes in town or provide one in the front seat of the cab.⁴

With the discovered connection between military expansion and the rise in prostitution, both civilian and military authorities pondered the possible tactics of combat. Theorizing that "the most effective method of reducing the increasing venereal disease rate is by the repression of prostitution", Congress reinstated the May Act in June of 1941.⁵ This legislation, originally passed in World War I, made prostitution within close proximity of military training bases a federal offense. However, the May Act involved a long and complex process before any federal action against the offending area took place. Only after a series of warnings, surveys and probationary periods would the War Department finally take action.⁶ Despite its use in Tennessee and North Carolina, the act was never instituted in Illinois. Though threats of its usage continued throughout the war, Illinois remained free of federal control concerning vice suppression.

The command at Chanute viewed action from authorities in the neighboring towns as crucial in combating prostitution. They discovered that the local authorities were more than willing to oblige. Chanute's Provost

⁴ Letters, Willis George to C.S. Haven and S.E. Griffith, October 29, 1941, October 9, 1942, and May 7, 1943, RG 6/1/36, UIUC Archives.

⁵ California State Department of Public Health, *Weekly Bulletin* 21 (January 16, 1943): 205.

⁶ Kathryn Close, "In May Act Areas," *Survey Midmonthly* 59 (March 1943): 67-70.

Marshal, Captain Green, vigorously cooperated and coordinated efforts with law enforcement officials from the surrounding communities.⁷ Conferences were held with local police in the cities of Champaign, Danville, Mattoon and Charleston, requesting cooperation in the camp's endeavors against prostitution and venereal disease.⁸ Allan Berube notes the use of Military Policemen to dissuade vice in civilian communities and Chanute provides an example of this.⁹ With local agreement, Chanute dispatched military policemen to walk the neighborhoods of nearby towns, in the hope that their mere presence would dissuade potential vice activities.¹⁰

In his study of wartime behavior, Paul Fussell notes that alcohol consumption increased during World War II.¹¹ However, the command at Chanute Field linked alcohol consumption with the patronizing of prostitutes and attempted to limit the amount soldiers imbibed while outside the camp. Representatives from the Field met with local tavern owners in Champaign, Urbana and Rantoul to request regulation of military consumption. If a soldier appeared on the way to intoxication, bartenders were expected to refuse additional drink requests. Throughout the war, Captain Green reminded the tavern owners of their obligation

⁷ Herrron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (1917-1941)*, 455.

⁸ Herrron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (January-July 1943)*, 458.

⁹ Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 120-121.

¹⁰ Letter, Willis George to C.S. Havens and S.E. Griffith, May 7, 1943, RG6/1/36, UIUC Archives.

¹¹ Fussell, *Wartime*, 96.

to "keep their slates clean" and to comply with the venereal disease program. This compliance included the decrease in sales of packaged liquor to men in uniform and the termination of check cashing services. In addition, the proprietors of drinking establishments were relied on for their knowledge of the communities. "Tavern owners know the 'bums' of their communities" asserted Green and were expected to identify such individuals and aid the army in the implementation of their "venereal clean-up program." This did not make the proprietors "stool pigeon(s)" but rather concerned involved citizens. "Happily", Green discovered, "the tavern owners and hotels ... leaned over backwards in going along with the military in this county." Captain Green returned this complicity by offering to assist directly in situations involving soldiers that required additional help. Green instructed the tavern owners that if a soldier became belligerent upon a bartender's refusal to provide drink his "bedside phone (was) always in readiness for collect calls should the least disturbance arise when the drink is refused."¹²

Local police forces aggressively fought prostitution from every angle. State statutes allowed community jurisdiction of up to three miles outside the outer boundaries of city limits in the suppression of "disorderly houses" and "houses of ill fame."¹³ The maximum fines and

¹² *Champaign News Gazette*, 2, February 21, 1945.

¹³ *Statutes of Illinois Relating to Environmental Sanitation and Disease Prevention in and around Military Camps-Naval Bases and Defense*

imprisonment for participating in prostitution were \$200 and one year in prison.¹⁴ These severe fines and prison sentences became the normal procedure when prostitutes faced prosecution in Champaign County.¹⁵ To garner these arrests, the civilian authorities even attempted to enlist soldiers from the Field in an entrapment scheme.¹⁶ Law enforcement officials also held a meeting with the local taxi drivers, warning them of pandering charges if caught carrying prostitutes. Additionally, these charges would result in the revocation of their taxi licenses.¹⁷

The moderate success of Champaign-Urbana and Chanute Field authorities in controlling vice situations was apparent in both the venereal disease rate of the camp and the number of prostitutes apprehended by local officials. At the beginning of the war, Chanute Field boasted the lowest venereal disease rate of any other service base in the Sixth Command, the regional division for the state of Illinois.¹⁸ Throughout the war years, the authorities at Chanute were proud to proclaim the lowest venereal disease rate of any army air field in the United States.¹⁹ Similarly, during the height of the war, over 65 percent of prostitutes apprehended for potentially infecting Chanute men in the

Industries: Educational Circular No. 125 (Springfield: State Department of Public Health, 1941), 6.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁵ Champaign News Gazette, 2, February 12, 1942.

¹⁶ Letter, Willis George to C. S. Haven and S. E. Griffith, November 20, 1942, RG6/1/36, UIUC Archives.

¹⁷ Champaign News Gazette, 3, February 2, 1942.

¹⁸ Herrron, *History of 3502nd AAF Base Unit (1917-1941)*, 81.

¹⁹ Champaign News Gazette, 2, January 28, 1943.

Champaign-Urbana area faced prosecution, proving the efforts of the law enforcement authorities moderately successful.²⁰

These successes appear even more impressive when compared to other regions of Illinois faced with the combined problem of prostitution and a rising venereal disease rate. Throughout World War II, Illinois continually found itself under the threat of invocation of the May Act due to a few areas which could not control escalating vice problems. These threats came from the office of Col. Thomas Gowenlock, who served as a liaison between local law enforcement agencies and the military.²¹ Although reluctant to call in the federal government to deal with the problem of prostitution, Gowenlock continually reminded the town officials that the threat of federal involvement was very real. Towns as small as Olney (pop. 1,000) and as large as Peoria (pop. 105,087) contributed to the impending military crackdown.

Though large towns were usually connected to the problem of uncontrolled vice, the small town of Olney found itself threatened with federal intervention in 1943. Due to a plethora of venereal infections in Air Force members originating in and around Olney, Gowenlock warned the mayor of federal action if local efforts did not produce sufficient results. Although Olney did not possess a distinct red light district, "considerable prostitution

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Letter to Col. Thomas Gowenlock, Illinois War Council Records (IWCRC), Illinois State Archives (ISA), RG518.13.

exist(ed)."²² Future investigation revealed that the chief of police in the town and the mayor felt that they could not do anything to control the situation.²³ Olney is not mentioned again in regard to the May Act threat, yet the fact that Gowenlock's office targeted the area even briefly attests to the seriousness of the situation.

When a city showed evidence of uncontrolled vice conditions, the command at Chanutte closed the area to soldiers on leave. In the winter of 1941-1942, Bloomington, a city 50 miles west of the base, found itself off limits to Chanutte men after ten infected soldiers returned from a December holiday in the red light district.²⁴ Of the 48 cases reported that month, approximately 25 percent originated from Bloomington. This prompted the command to forbid travel to Bloomington, even for soldiers who resided there, until the city "clean(ed) its skirts."²⁵

This action resulted in a sweep of the area known as "The Line". The Line gave Bloomington "a blatant presence of brothels in a visible geographical area."²⁶ A segregated area of town, literally on the other side of the railroad tracks, the Line had no reason to fear repression before World War II. The chief of police, along with the mayor of Bloomington, both ignored and defended the "sin

²² Letter, Col. Thomas Gowenlock to Mayor Porter, Sept. 29, 1943, IWRC, ISA,, RGS18.13..

²³ Memorandum to Col. Gowenlock, IWRC, ISA, RGS18.13.

²⁴ *Bloomington Pantagraph*, 2, January 7, 1942.

²⁵ *The Rantoul Press*, 1, January 15, 1942.

²⁶ Frank Morn, "Prostitution, Police and City Culture in a Small Midwestern City: A History, 1900-1960." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 12 (Spring 1990): 149.

district."²⁷ Furthermore, the inhabitants of the Line need not have feared the invocation of the May Act. Because this act was specifically aimed at the repression of prostitution within reasonable distances of military encampments, Bloomington's vice businesses felt safe. In fact, the Line stood to profit from the threat of the May Act. With the Champaign-Urbana area directly under the threat of the May Act, the men traveled to Bloomington, where prostitutes were more readily available.²⁸ Nevertheless, the Line closed during World War II. Faced with pressure from both the commands of the local military bases and the public, who had long clamored for closure, law enforcement officials acquiesced and officially closed the line for the duration of the war.²⁹

To appease the authorities of Chanute Field, a sweep of the Line occurred during the period when Bloomington was declared off limits. One sweep in December of 1941 resulted in the arrest of over 30 women engaged in the business of prostitution. Three women were arrested under the charge of pandering (i.e. "keeper of a house of ill fame") while the rest faced the charge of prostitution (i.e. "inmate of a house of ill fame.")³⁰ While the majority of the women were Illinois natives, six were listed as residents of other states, adding fuel to the fear that women were purposely

27 Ibid., 154.

28 Ibid. 153.

29 Ibid., 154.

30 McLean County Jail Dockets, December 13, 1941, IRAD, Illinois State University.

traveling to Illinois due to the increase of potential customers.³¹

After the sweeps, however, the military authorities at Chanute lifted the ban and soldiers on leave once again visited Bloomington. Bloomington was not the only community faced with finding itself off limits to the men of Chanute Field. A year after the problems in Bloomington were resolved, the town of Danville, 40 miles southeast of Chanute, faced a similar situation. The Army called for a clean up of the vice conditions there and proclaimed that no soldier on leave was allowed to step foot into the city until this occurred.³² The authorities of Danville voiced their concerns to state officials about being considered off limits. Gowenlock discussed the situation with Captain Green and reported that the authorities of Chanute were willing to resume issuing passes to Danville in as little as two weeks if clean up began immediately.³³ A list was circulated which named rumored establishments and areas of town offering vice services. Thus, the police of Danville were able to target such places as the Savoy, Dutch Mill and the Manhattan. Belgium street was targeted in particular because all its taverns were involved in vice activities.³⁴

³¹ Ibid.

³² Danville Commercial News, 1, March 7, 1943.

³³ Letter from Col. Thomas Gowenlock to Danville Chief of Police Richard Johnson, March 9, 1943, IWRC, ISA, RG/518.13.

³⁴ Memorandum, Colonel Thomas Gowenlock, March 1943, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

Like Bloomington, Danville immediately took action to remedy the situation and the Army lifted the ban within months.³⁵

This success was short lived. A short time after this occurrence, officials at Chanute once again considered declaring Danville off limits. Lack of coordination between city and health officials and the Chanute venereal disease control officer disturbed Captain Green and he urged the two factions to correct the situation. Green also apprised the Danville sheriff of the areas of town considered objectionable to the military authorities. Replying that all establishments on the list were already closed, the sheriff pledged to create and maintain closer contact with the military authorities in the fight against vice and venereal disease. Danville officials claimed they wished to emulate the successful relationship between Chanute Field and the Champaign-Urbana area.³⁶

Though its "official" red light district was closed during the war, Bloomington continued to experience problems with prostitution. Arrest records demonstrate that the crackdown on established brothels did nothing to alter the activity of casual prostitutes. Other than the sweep arrests from 1941, no record exists of any women arrested for either prostitution or solicitation during World War II. However, this does not mean that prostitution did not exist in Bloomington or that the police failed to garner arrests.

³⁵ Letter, Willis George to C.S. Haven and S.E. Griffith, April 3, 1943, 306/1/36, UIUC Archives.

³⁶ Letter, Col. Thomas Gowenlock to Janet Burgoon, IWCR, ISA, RG, 518.13.

Common practice in the 1940's in Bloomington was to record the arrest of a woman caught soliciting under the categories of "Drunk & Disorderly", "Vagrancy", or simply "Investigation."³⁷ When those categories are considered, the arrest numbers for prostitution remain the same throughout the war. In 1941, prior to the sweep, the police apprehended 20 suspected prostitutes under the previously listed charges. This annual number remained in the following years, despite the December sweep of the Line. Twenty-one women faced prosecution in 1943, with the number rising to twenty-three in 1944. Obviously, the official closing of the Line did not eradicate prostitution from the city limits of Bloomington.³⁸

Many of the women arrested were repeat offenders. The quick turnover rate between arrest, prosecution and release demonstrates the inadequate enforcement of penalties for the crime of prostitution. While Champaign County strove to apply the toughest available penalties for this crime, McLean County's usual punishment appeared to be a slap on the wrist. The prostitute arrested during the war years faced an average fine often as low as eighteen dollars. Jail time typically ranged from eight to thirty days. Once this small fee was paid and the sentence served, the prostitute was free to resume business until the next arrest. The repeat offenders often continued to receive

³⁷ Dr. Beverly Smith, interview, June 9, 1990.

³⁸ McLean County Jail Dockets, December 13, 1941, IRAD, Illinois State University.

light sentences on subsequent arrests. ³⁹ Bloomington found it difficult to attain control of prostitution without the use of harsh penalties for solicitation.

From the beginning of the war, Gowenlock strenuously worked to ensure that local officials would deal effectively with the vice situation. In late 1941, he met with members of the law enforcement agencies of Illinois, including the Mayors of Tolono, Champaign, and Rantoul along with law enforcement officials from these areas. During this meeting he clearly outlined the consequences of inaction on their part. However, he also explicitly stated his aversion to interference in local police control.⁴⁰ Throughout the war, Gowenlock walked a tightrope between threatening federal interference and the laissez-faire attitude concerning prostitution and local authorities.

Vice conditions in Illinois worsened and a meeting between Gowenlock and the chiefs of police from various towns was held on in early 1942 to discuss emergency plans of attack.⁴¹ These two meetings were the first of a string of meetings held frequently throughout the war. Discussions centered on law enforcement as a tool in controlling the venereal disease rate and tactics of social protection, such as prophylactics and treatment of infections. During a two month period no less than 29 meetings were held concerning

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Minutes of Meeting, Law Enforcement Agencies of Illinois, December 30, 1941, IWCR, ISA, RG518.13

⁴¹ Memorandum, Col. Thomas Gowenlock, January 23, 1942, IWRC, ISA, RG518.13

the topic of social protection.⁴² For example, the November 1943 War Conference on Social Protection was held in Decatur. Topics of discussion included possible mandatory blood testing for industrial workers, existing legislation for the quarantine and treatment of those infected with venereal disease and available options for the control of vice and venereal disease. Officials from nearby areas attended, including Captain Green from Chanute Field. However, unlike many who attended he was not there to discover ways of controlling vice and venereal disease in his jurisdiction but rather to encourage other officials to study and imitate the program established at Chanute Field. Calling the program at the Field and Champaign County "relatively successful" in fighting vice and disease he advocated the adoption of the program so that other areas might attain the low rate of infection boasted by the base.⁴³

The problems of venereal disease and prostitution came to a head in the summer of 1942. During the month of August, a series of articles ran in the major state newspapers detailing the start of the "state's biggest vice drive" to date. Within ten days, 50 local officials met with plant owners and military authorities to discuss the situation. This campaign against vice was considered the "most vigorous ... against commercial vice in the state's

⁴² Col. Thomas Gowenlock's Calendar, IWCR, ISA, RG518.13

⁴³ Letter to Col. Thomas Gowenlock from Captain Norris Green, November, 1943, IWCR, ISA, RG518.13.

history" to occur in areas outside metropolitan Chicago.⁴⁴ The catalyst for the campaign was a call to clean up both the Chicago area and the city of Peoria. Chicago responded to the call by attempting to forbid the patronage of bars and taverns by unescorted women. Taverns were forbidden to employ hostesses.⁴⁵ Until this time, Peoria carried the reputation of being "ultraliberal" in regard to vice activities. Even with the crackdown on vice activities the mayor of the town declared that he did "not want to stop the boys from having boisterous good fun, occasionally enjoyed by red-blooded fighting men." He only wished to "protect them from commercial vice and to erect a barrier between them and social disease."⁴⁶ With this attitude, Mayor Kelly cooperated with Gowenlock in the targeting of 20 brothels in Peoria for closure.⁴⁷

This cooperation between Peoria, Chicago and the office of Gowenlock marked the beginning of his intrusion into the realm of local authorities. Until the summer of 1942, Gowenlock refused Federal Security Agency appeals to intercede in vice issues he considered completely and rightly under local jurisdiction.⁴⁸ Though he denied "premature stories" of May Act invocation, Gowenlock's sudden interest in tackling the issue of vice and coordinating local efforts demonstrated that he believed it

⁴⁴ Chicago Herald American, 1, August 28, 1940, IWCR, ISA, RG518.4

⁴⁵ Chicago Sun, 1, August 18, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG518.4

⁴⁶ Chicago Herald American, 1, August 17, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG518.4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Evanston Review, 1, August 20, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG518.4.

was possible.⁴⁹ During the year, information concerning the deplorable vice conditions in the cities and towns of Illinois poured into Gowenlock's office. All tips were investigated and added fuel to the fiery drive against prostitution and venereal disease.

Both official informants and average citizens offered vice information regarding all areas, from Chicago to East St. Louis. Fort Sheridan, located northwest of Chicago, dispatched official military informants to infiltrate the surrounding communities and report on vice activity. One informant returned with a story of a proposition and seduction attempt by a middle aged homosexual man who approached young men, took them to secluded places and attempted sexual intercourse.⁵⁰

Often, ordinary citizens would assume responsibility for reporting infractions committed by the people in their towns. Small towns found themselves under investigation due to a letter written to Gowenlock's office from a concerned resident calling for the closure of the town tavern due to perceived vice problems.⁵¹ While Gowenlock and other authorities read and investigated most reports, not all of them received serious consideration. Elaborately concocted tales of alcohol consumption, sex and espionage triggered not only investigation of the towns and establishments

⁴⁹ *Chicago Daily Times*, 1, August 17, 1942.

⁵⁰ Military Intelligence Report, Fort Sheridan, September 9, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13

⁵¹ Letter to Col. Thomas Gowenlock, August 19, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

involved but also the letter writer. A letter written to the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, detailed the experiences of a man staying at a hotel in East St. Louis. After awakening to loud "hilarity going on in several of the rooms" in the vicinity, the man spoke to the desk clerk who informed him that the occupants of the rooms were soldiers and their female guests. While the gentleman did not object to soldiers enjoying their off duty time, he considered the practice of consorting with women and drinking detrimental to the safety of the country. He believed that what actually transpired in the rooms next to his might very well have been espionage. Perhaps the female guests of the men deliberately encouraged the intoxication of soldiers in order to extract military secrets. In addition, the vice conditions of the hotel demanded investigation.⁵²

Gowenlock suspected that the writer was an "old crack pot" who "stayed up nights looking for trouble."⁵³ His suspicions proved true when upon contact with the Chief of Police in East St. Louis it was discovered that the hotel in question possessed a respectable reputation, while the author of the letter had been a frequent inmate of many mental institutions.⁵⁴

⁵² Letter, Victor Koenig to Henry Stimson, August, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁵³ Letter, Col. Thomas Gowenlock to Major Miller, August 31, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁵⁴ Letter, Chief of Police, East St. Louis to Col. Thomas Gowenlock, September 2, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

The war against vice and venereal disease closed out 1942 with a regional conference in Chicago focusing on social protection. The proceedings included presentation of the national point of view concerning venereal disease. Rates of the armed forces were divulged as well as remedies proposed by several military authorities. Though 50 percent of the infection rate for the military originated overseas, the command still regarded the homefront venereal disease rate as a threat to the forces. To define the problem in Illinois more clearly, the Navy conducted a study in the Chicago area to pinpoint the types of contacts responsible for the spread of the disease. The majority of vice activities had moved beyond the red light districts and expanded into drink hustling at taverns. With these casual pickups entered into the equation, 75 percent of military venereal disease infections resulted from some form of prostitution.⁵⁵ To combat this, some military commanders called for the creation of regulated, segregated red light districts. According to Beth Bailey and David Farber, this solution proved effective in Hawaii.⁵⁶ Others, Chanutte foremost among them, viewed repression, education, recreation and the creation of moral examples as the answer. In other words, the answer to the vice and venereal disease

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

⁵⁶ Bailey and Farber, *The First Strange Place*.

problem was a combined "moral-chemical-mechanical" attack.⁵⁷

The chemical battle plan consisted chiefly of prophylaxis measures. The U.S. Public Health Service representative emphasized these measures as the main weapon in the fight against venereal disease. However, this countered, in some attendees' eyes, the objective of establishing moral codes for the soldiers to live by. Providing means to prevent the disease appeared to some as advocating active sex lives.⁵⁸ The mechanical attack centered on law enforcement and the suppression of prostitution. Attention towards this topic centered on law enforcement officials realizing that there was now a new type of prostitution: casual prostitutes, usually drink hustlers and pickup girls who worked with cab drivers.⁵⁹

At first these conferences pertained to the entire state of Illinois. However, with the construction of Camp Ellis, these meetings and discussions of vice control frequently centered on the city of Peoria. During the war years, Peoria experienced an increase in the rate of venereal disease as well as the establishment of brothels. While the closure of the Line benefited Bloomington, it produced more problems for an area already plagued by uncontrollable vice conditions. By the summer of 1942 it was

⁵⁷ Minutes, Regional Conference on Social Protection, December 11, 1942,
¹ IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.
⁵⁸ Ibid., 7-8.
⁵⁹ Ibid., 17.

reported that the "girls responsible for Chanute Field authorities declaring Bloomington, Illinois out of bounds for a period, left Bloomington and established businesses in Peoria."⁶⁰ Camp Ellis, an Army infantry training field located in nearby Galesburg, officially opened in January, 1943.⁶¹ With the construction of the camp under way in 1942, federal authorities considered Peoria a military area, thus under the jurisdiction of the May Act. Over 40 houses of prostitution were created during the war, employing 150 to 200 women. The venereal disease rate surpassed not only the state rate but the national rate as well. Civilian rate of infection in Peoria was recorded at 37 per 1000 as compared to the national rate of 7 per 1000. In 1943 alone, over 350 servicemen contracted a form of venereal disease from a contact in Peoria. Over 280 of these cases originated from Peoria taverns, and over 200 from nine specific establishments.⁶² The authorities were well informed of places of prostitution and the methods of solicitation. Reports detailed the prices of pleasure and the infamous rap at the window to garner potential clients.⁶³ The following year saw what at first appeared to be a successful arrest rate for women suspected of prostitution. Over 200 women were arrested in 1944 for prostitution, however, most were dismissed with a nominal

⁶⁰ Letter, Janet Burgoon to Col. Gowenlock, June, 11, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁶¹ Watters, *Illinois in the Second World War*, 141.

⁶² Peoria Association of Commerce Statement, IWCR, ISA, RG 518.13.

fine. Instead of enforcing the maximum penalties, Peoria officials dismissed cases of prostitution after exacting a meager fine of \$10.50.⁶⁴

Gowenlock regularly met with Peoria's law enforcement officials of Peoria to discuss vice suppression. To pinpoint and define the exact problem, military authorities in Illinois communicated frequently in order to determine the number of venereal disease cases originating in Peoria. Inquiries into the number of venereal disease cases out of Peoria were conducted in the entire state of Illinois. In 1943, Major General Henry S. Aurand, Commander of the Sixth confirmed military venereal disease cases within the state of Illinois with contacts in Peoria. Also requested were statistical comparisons figures between the infection rate emanating from Peoria and from other cities within the state. Gowenlock directed similar inquiries to the Commandant of the Ninth Naval District, headquartered in Chicago.⁶⁵ These requests for venereal disease rates originating from Peoria followed similar requests for names of women cited as contacts in order to locate and treat the source of infection in a procedure referred to as contact tracing.⁶⁶

⁶³ Letter, Janet Burgoon to Thomas Gowenlock, June 11, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁶⁴ Peoria Association of Commerce Statement, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁶⁵ Letter, Col. Gowenlock to Major General Henry S. Aurand, Commander of Sixth Service, July 22, 1943, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁶⁶ Letter, Col. Thomas Gowenlock to Admiral John Downes, August 27, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

State officials were also aware of the problems in Peoria. At the time of Gowenlock's inquiries, Illinois Senator Thomas Madden appealed to the Sixth Commander to dispatch military policemen to aid the city in its fight against prostitution. Referring to the situation as "desperate", Senator Madden claimed the city did not just request help, it "demand(ed)" it.⁶⁷

However, federal help was just what Gowenlock strove to avoid. In correspondence with the mayor of Peoria, Gowenlock eagerly informed the city official of areas of town requiring attention in order to avoid federal interference. Local action was requested and expected immediately, yet Gowenlock felt no compulsion to call on federal or military officials to aid in the city's clean-up. Gowenlock reported to city officials that he had "left the problem of controlling vice in so-called military and defense areas strictly to the local law enforcement officers." The towns surrounding Peoria also enjoyed this lack of interference, regardless of their vice problems.⁶⁸ To Dwight Green, Governor of Illinois, Gowenlock reported that he had "the whole hearted support of all police agencies and mayors" and that in his efforts regarding vice control he was "fighting their battle and protecting them against federal interference."

⁶⁷ Telegram, Senator Thomas Madden to Commander, Sixth Service, July 22, 1943, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁶⁸ Letter, Col. Thomas Gowenlock to E.N. Woodruff, October 20, 1942, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

Attempting to live up to the faith Gowenlock had in them, city officials of Peoria met with the military to discuss again the problem of vice and venereal disease control. State regulations regarding quarantine and confinement of suspected prostitutes without consent were reiterated. This conference resulted in agreement on behalf of Peoria city officials and police to close down known houses of prostitution, examine the inhabitants, and quarantine those diagnosed with any form of venereal disease.⁶⁹ Once again, Gowenlock took the opportunity to espouse the necessity of leaving the situation in the hands of local officials. Throughout the entire war, Gowenlock emphatically stressed the threat of May Act invocation and federal intervention while working incessantly to avoid it.

As late as January 1945, federal action still remained a possible threat. Reminders were sent from the venereal disease control officer at Camp Ellis to state officials regarding the need for action towards the resolution of vice problems if Peoria did not wish to find itself off limits to the men at the camp.⁷⁰ The possibility of the invocation of the federal act became apparent shortly after the declaration of war and remained until the war's end. Though the use of the act never materialized, Peoria lived under the continuous threat of federal intervention due to its unchecked vice conditions.

⁶⁹ Memorandum, Col. Thomas Gowenlock, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

⁷⁰ Memorandum, Dr. George Taylor to Dr. Roland Cross, January 17, 1945, IWCR, ISA, RG/518.13.

What the officials of Peoria lacked that might have aided them in their fight against vice was previous experience in dealing with military authorities. By World War II, Chanute Field and the towns of Champaign County already possessed a working relationship. Though the base was significantly smaller than it became in the late 1930's, its existence from World War I provided continuity for the civil and base authorities. Camp Ellis was a creation of World War II and Peoria had no previous experiences to draw upon. In addition, the populations of both areas affected the reactions of the civil authorities. Peoria was significantly larger than the Champaign-Urbana area. In 1940, Peoria listed a population of approximately 105,080 while the combined towns of Champaign and Urbana together had over 37,000 citizens.⁷¹

This smaller population affected the attitudes in two ways. While Peoria was a larger city, possessing big city mentalities and probably accepted the changing mores of society, Champaign-Urbana still clung to its small town ways. This relaxation of virtue was not as easily tolerated. In addition, Chanute Field was a prized possession to the people of Champaign County. Peoria already maintained many industries which employed large numbers, making Camp Ellis a nice addition but not mandatory to the well being of their city. On the contrary, the

⁷¹ Bureau of Census, 1940, Population File, Urbana Free Library.

citizens of Champaign County had faced the possible closure of Chanute Field and realized the importance of the base. With the expansion program begun in 1938, a large portion of the population of the surrounding towns found employment either on the base or in some related industry. Cooperation with the military authorities of the base was a small price for the boom it brought to the local economy. Civilian officials were happy to work towards the repression of prostitution and the control of venereal disease and had previous experience to draw upon.

Whatever the reasons, it is apparent that the officials of Champaign County and Chanute Field achieved a respectable level of success in the fight against prostitution and venereal disease. Not only do the high arrest statistics and low levels of infection attest to this but also the use of the base's program as a role model. Additionally, the fact that during the states' biggest drive against vice did not mention the area speaks of their success. When the majority of newspapers in the summer of 1942 spoke of the situation in featured articles, the newspapers of Champaign County did not discuss the subject. While other counties began to show concern about the vice problems existing in their communities, Champaign County continually acted to correct them.

Conclusion

From expansion in 1938 until the end of World War II, Chanute Field experienced a varying venereal disease rate. This rate rose sharply, faltered and then rebounded at the end of the war years. Both military and civilian authorities connected venereal disease rates with the practice of prostitution and thus began various programs to eradicate this threat, and the accompanying threat of venereal disease from the areas surrounding Chanute. All attempts to curb the venereal disease rate through either prophylactic or legal means as well as planning alternate diversions produced a variety of results.

Likewise, motivational factors varied. What prompted the military officials to action did not necessarily coincide with the catalysts behind civilian action. While civilian authorities conceded to the perceived threat to the overall health of the population, the military considered venereal disease a more direct threat to troop readiness. After the loss of seven million work days during World War I due to troop infection rates, the military wished to act to avoid a similar situation. As the country progressed towards war, the military quickly acted to prevent the experiences of World War I. Their actions prompted responses from their civilian counter-parts. Some saw the need to curb prostitution as a moral issue, viewing the military crackdown as an opportunity to rid their

communities of immoral behavior. Others took issue with the illegality of prostitution. Prostitution was against the law, therefore those involved should be arrested and punished. The health of the civilian population of Illinois also played a factor in local officials' attempts to curb prostitution.

However, perhaps the strongest motivational tool implemented by the military to instigate prostitution crack downs by civilian authorities concerned the fear of federal intervention. Through the coordinator of law enforcement agencies, the federal government clearly implied its determination to act upon its ability to institute the May Act, which made prostitution a federal offense, if action and results failed to materialize. In the meantime, military officials took quick action against any community cited as the source of frequent outbreaks of venereal disease. Cities and towns found themselves off limits to any soldier on leave if it did not attempt and show improvement. This presented quite a threat to the economic prosperity of a community. Few communities, especially those with smaller populations, wished to be off limits to soldiers on leave with full pockets on payday.

However, this threat never concerned the communities surrounding Chanute Field. By the time the federal officials were seriously threatening intervention, the efforts of local officials and the Chanute command already achieved a level of success and were touted as something all

should emulate. Through coordinated efforts of health measures, law enforcement and the provision of wholesome activities to distract the men, Champaign County and Chanute Field fought to control the venereal disease rate and the threat of vice in their communities. While the problem was never completely resolved, it was under control. At the height of the federal government's crackdown and threats of the May Act, Chanute Field's venereal disease rate was at its lowest. While others, such as Peoria and Camp Ellis faced chronic problems with prostitution and venereal disease, Chanute Field and the cities of Rantoul, Champaign and Urbana certainly had the problem under control. Other areas of the state attempted to match this success, yet never quite achieved it.

Factors contributing to the success of the area are varied. Previous experience in civil-military relations aided the command at Chanute and the people of the communities in their endeavors. Geography also attributed to the success. After travel of longer distances was halted, Champaign-Urbana became the main area of recreation for the men of Chanute. This aided in bringing the infection rate down for the base. Because Champaign-Urbana cooperated and worked to combat venereal disease and prostitution, this was a relatively safe area for the commanders to allow their men to visit. Due to its small population, the area also maintained small town values and, rather than look away from vice activity in their midst,

worked to eradicate it. This was looked upon as an opportunity to regulate sexual behavior.

Additionally, the communities valued the presence of Chanute Field and worked to achieve a long-lasting positive relationship. The cities of Rantoul, Champaign and Urbana eagerly coordinated with military officials in order to combat the prostitution/veneral disease threat. The lasting effect was a strong relationship between the base and the communities which was enjoyed for years to come, until the base closure in 1993. Institutions created during the war exist today, such as the local YMCA's. The communities around Chanute provide an example of effective coordination against prostitution and veneral disease. From the early days of expansion in 1938 until the end of the war in 1945, officials regularly held conferences to share ideas and practices to aid them in their endeavors. Civil law enforcement officials met with their military counterparts to discuss tactics of apprehension of known prostitutes. Civilian health officials operated clinics for the treatment of veneral disease, while military health officials did the same as well as providing prophylactic measures to soldiers. Along with concern for the legal and health issues, both groups saw this as an opportunity to regulate sexual behavior. To aid this effort, the community sought to give the soldiers moral and wholesome recreational opportunities. Through these coordinated efforts, Chanute Field and its surrounding communities in Champaign County

effectively fought the threat of prostitution and venereal disease during World War II.

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